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ABSTRACT

This publication provides chapter-by-chapter synopses of the 1981 report of the Danish Child Welfare Commission. Chapter 1 contains the Commission's introductory remarks on its terms of reference and emphasizes that parents have primary responsibility for the raising of their children. Chapter 2 provides a documentary account of the living conditions experienced by today's Danish children and their parents. Demographic changes which have occurred over the last few decades are also discussed. Chapter 3 deals with the developmental characteristics of young children and identifies the prerequisites necessary for healthy personality development. Chapter 4 gives an evaluation of the social conditions under which young children grow up, and Chapters 5 and 6 outline considerations underlying formulation of a child welfare policy. Chapter 7 discusses the child's status in relation to Denmark's domestic laws. Chapters 8, 9, 10, and 11 contain the Commission's reflections and suggestions on the following: parental employment; families with young children; the social community; the influence of the physical environment on developing children; and the financial situation of families with young children. Chapter 12 discusses some of the characteristics of families with children who have special needs, and also details problems encountered by children of immigrant parents. Finally, Chapter 13 contains a summary of the Commission's recommendations and outlines possible problems associated with forming policies for children. (Author/MP)

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Summary of the Report from The Danish Child Welfare Commission

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Report no. 918

Copenhagen 1981

This is an extract of "The Report from the Child Welfare Commission", published in Copenhagen 1981 (ISBN: 87-503-3595-2, So 00-7-bet.). 4 commitees under the Commission published in 1980 their reports:

"The economy and working conditions of families with children", "The housing and environment conditions of young children", "Young children, day care institutions and day care service in private homes" and "Young children and early efforts".

All reports can be bought in the bookshops.

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Extract of the Terms of reference of the Child Welfare Commission

The aims and obligations of society as regards training and education of the school age child are expressed in Section 2 of Act Nr. 313 of 26 June 1975 on the Primary School.

A similar evaluation of the obligations of society towards the child of pre-school age, which is of fundamental importance to the development of the child, has not been made.

The responsibility for the upbringing of children lies with the parents. However, it must be admitted that the children's development conditions are influenced by the changes in society – industrialization, urbanization, the increasing geographical mobility, the traffic intensity, the parents' working conditions, etc. – and that these fundamental changes again have an influence on the parents' situation in relation to their children.

Further, it has been proved that the technological advances in some respects have reduced the small children's possibilities of experience, development, and contact, and that the children start in school with a widely different social, linguistic, and conceptuel background.

In different fields society has contributed to establish services for small children such as preventive medical examinations and grants for day care institutions, etc., and small children also benefit from provisions aiming at all children, such as family allowances, children's allowances, family guidance, and other supportive measures in pursuance of the Children and Young Persons Act. However, the available information is insufficient for an overall evaluation of whether the different services contribute reasonably to promote sound and secure conditions of growth for the children.

The Government has, therefore, decided to appoint a Commission which shall examine the conditions of children of pre-school age in this country and discuss whether the conditions are adequate in view of the needs of the children, the families and society. Whenever necessary, the information may include results of research and in-

quiries, also from other countries, particularly the other Nordic countries.

The Commission shall examine and, where it is considered necessary, make proposals concerning:

1. *Family policy measures.* The Commission is especially requested to make an evaluation of the economic situation of families with small children compared to other families, and to reach a conclusion concerning the need for financial benefits compared to other kinds of benefits for children. If necessary, benefits to families with older children may be taken into consideration. Further, the Commission shall make an evaluation of the parents' working situation in relation to the children's possibilities of development.

2. *Housing and environment conditions* and their influence on small children's development conditions (town planning, the size of dwellings, playgrounds, road safety, the placing of day care institutions etc. in the environment).

3. *Day care institutions* and day care service in private homes in relation to children and parents, and the coordination between these services, the lokal social and health services, and the primary school, and in this connection the educational aims and methods of the day care institutions, and ways and means of solving and financing these services.

4. *Early efforts* to ensure a healthy physical, psychical, and social development, e.g. health services for pregnant women, maternity leave, medical examination of children, health visitor services, including preventive social work and family guidance.

Summary

Chapter 1

Chapter 1 contains the Commission's *introductory reflections on the terms of reference*. It is emphasized that the main responsibility in respect of bringing up children, rests with the parents.

There are two major points of departure for the work of the Commission, one is a recognition of the connection between the conditions under which children grow up and the changes that take place in the society that surrounds them, another is the emphasizing of the obligations of society in this connection. The deliberations of the Commission thus aim at mitigating the negative effects of the changes in society and at supporting the positive ones.

The last few decades have seen considerable changes in the framework of family life and consequently in the obligations of the family towards the children. Hence the need for a broad and comprehensive debate of the tasks and responsibilities of the society and the family towards the children.

As examples of how the public authorities interfere in the parents' possibilities of securing reasonable conditions for their children during their childhood, are mentioned, not only the parents' connection with the labour market, the number of day care institutions, and the financial situation of the family, but also such fields as housing, health and welfare, and environment. No families thus exercise their responsibility for the upbringing of their children and the conditions under which they grow up totaly isolated from the society that surrounds them.

The conditions of most families for giving their children a good life materially have changed essentially and a number of traditional problems of family policy have lost some of their immediacy.

A number of new problems of family policy have arisen, however. Many parents have a long working day, initial housing costs are often very high, in many cases life in the immediate environment is dull and there is a shortage of day care institutions and child minders. Finally, there are special groups of families with children who

either have not got their share of the general increase of prosperity or who are characterized by having special problems.

So far the politicians' reply to problems of family policy has often been isolated partial solutions along the way and they have not been related to the more basic causes of the problems.

In the opinion of the Commission, politicians are under an obligation to try to alleviate the inequalities which the development has brought about. This obligation is of course even more obvious at a time of economic crisis, which will always first hit the weakest and most vulnerable. Consequently, the question of a fairer and more equal distribution of the human and material ressources of society assumes even greater importance. It will thus be necessary to consider the total amount of ressources allocated to children at a time of recession from the point of view of the general policy of allocation.

Chapter 2

Chapter 2 contains *a documentary account of the living conditions of young children and their parents today* and a pinpointing of the changes which have taken place over the last decades.

It appears from the section on *demography* that approx. half a million of the 5 million inhabitants of Denmark are young children. Fewer and fewer children are born, and in 1979 the number of births was 59,000 as against 88,000 in the mid.60s. Some of the causes of the falling birth rate are the increasing popularity of safe contraceptives, and the right to legal abortion, which was introduced in 1973. Since then the number of legal abortions has remained almost unchanged at about 25,000 annually.

Today the vast majority of children are born by women in their mid-twenties. The rate of teen-age mothers has been steadily decreasing over the last 10 years.

Most young children grow up within the framework of marriage: In about 80 per cent of the total of 375,000 families with young children in 1976 the parents were married. At first sight one might get surprised that about every fourth child is born out of wedlock. The explanation is a new family pattern according to which many, especially young persons, live together in a concensual union as a kind of »trial marriage«. Many get married about the time when the second child is born. At the same time there are indications, however, that more and more parents of young children chose to live together without getting married. In 1976 8 per cent of all families with children lived together in a consensual union.

An increasing number of children grow up in a one-parent family,

typically a single mother, who is separated or divorced. In 1978 almost 40,000 young children lived in one-parent families.

In 1978 the average family with children consisted of father, mother and 1.7 children. The usual thing is to have 1 or 2 children, only few families today have 4 or more children.

The number of divorces has doubled since the 60s and for the last decade it has been about 13,000 a year. The trend is towards an increase in the number of divorces among young married couples.

The section on *work and leisure time* emphasizes that in 1978 no less than about 80 per cent of all mothers of young children had a job. The last few years have seen a substantial increase in the number of women with young children engaged in active employment. Other tendencies mentioned are that among mothers engaged in active employment we find a increasing number working full time, and that mothers of young children are no longer so inclined to leave the labour market while the children are young.

The unemployment rate of mothers with young children is not known. The so-called »Circular on Child Minding« and the lack of day care institutions and child minders seem to lessen women's chances to find employment. Part-time employment is rather widespread among women with young children. About 40 per cent of the mothers with young children work part time, 40 per cent work full time, and 20 per cent have no employment at all.

Most of the mothers working outside their homes want shorter working hours than they have and more and more mothers of young children are attracted by the idea that also fathers should work part time. But the fathers of the real world do not identify themselves with that idea. Almost 90 per cent of all fathers of young children have a working week of 40 hours or more.

In spite of the fact that over the last few years men have, generally, participated more and more in domestic work, there is still a disparity in the distribution of work in the home. Compared with other men it seems that fathers of young children are the least active in the home. The typical areas of responsibility of mothers are e.g. the washing, mending of clothes, shopping and cooking as well as the daily clearing up and cleaning. In more than half of the families it is the mother alone who looks after the children when they fall ill.

Compared with people without children, parents earmark a smaller part of their leisure time for »their own activities«. Nevertheless it looks as if parents with young children engage themselves more in activities outside the home than do other people, e.g. local activities etc.

The section on *economy* mentions the fact that, on an average, families with children have a higher income rate than other families. But there are substantial variations and it is at the same time a fact that when taxable income is distributed on the number of members

of the family, married couples with children as well as single persons with children have only ⅔ of the corresponding incomes of families without children.

About ¼ of the families with children may be characterized as »low-income families«, i.e. they receive a taxable income of under Dkr. 60,000 (1975 figures). Apart from a majority of families with many children (3 or more) especially single supporters are overrepresented in the low-income group.

Compared with families without children, families with children seem to save up less and to spend a greater share of their disposable income on housing costs, electricity, fuel and transport. Families with children in the low-income groups seem to adapt to their poor consumption possibilities by cutting down on housing costs and by not getting themselves a car.

Over the last few decades, families with young children have got a much better housing standard. At a cost, though. About every second family with an oldest child of 6 or under found (in 1977) that rent or other housing costs were a strain on their total budget. This applies to owners as well as tenants. Families with children do not benefit especially from the rent allowances system.

Some parents appear to find it difficult to pay the expenses of the day care of their child. In 1975 this applied especially to single parents and to parents with a young child in a day nursery or with a child minder. In 1979 almost 17 per cent of all children (including children in recreation institutions) had a whole or partly free place.

The section on *housing and the immediate environment* emphazises that about ¾ of all young children live in detached houses or other low buildings standing in their own garden. One-family houses have become particularly popular with families with children, whereas the rate of such families in blocks of flats and farms has decreased.

Families with young children typically live in modern dwellings. Most of them thus have a high housing standard – except for the fact thar they live in more densely populated areas than the rest of the population.

There are, however, some young children living in low-standard dwellings. In 1976 about 1/10 of all families with young children lived in flats or houses which were not up to the minimum standard. This means that the families typically did not have hot water, a w.c. of their own, bath or central heating. Low-income families and single supporters are overrepresented in the older part of the housing stock.

Young children in low-house areas are out of doors more often and stay there for longer periods than young children living in blocks of flats. Children play where they like irrespective of road safety. Most accidents involving children occur in housing areas.

Contact with neighbours varies with the nature of the housing area. It is relatively greater in small towns than in suburban environments, and contact is also greater in densely built-up low-house areas than in areas of blocks of flats. Social life seems to be somewhat limited in many immediate environments.

The section on *day care institutions* states that in 1980 about 200,000 young children attended a day care institution or were in the care of a municipal child minder. Of these almost 60,000 were in the care of child minders and about 140,000 in day care institutions.

The trends in number of places have in the last decade been characterized by a relatively heavier growth of places with child minders, age – integrated institutions and kindergartens whereas day nurseries and recreation institutions have recorded a considerably lower growth rate. The number of children on waiting lists for public day care is rising despite the expansion of capacity. According to the calculations of the Danish Council on Equality 194,000 young children had an unmet demand for day care in 1980.

The day care coverage is not the same in all age groups, but on an average up to 40 per cent of all 0-6-year old children were covered by the public day care scheme in 1979. Among the 0-2-year olds of these children, about 60 per cent were looked after by child minders and the other 40 per cent in day care institutions, mainly day nurseries. Conversely, day care institutions are the absolutely predominant arrangements for 3-5-year-old children covered by the public day care scheme. As far as the 6-year-olds are concerned about 90 per cent were enrolled in a day care institution or a nursery school.

Many young children are being looked after by private child minders. There are may indications that there are as many young children who are being looked after by private child minders, au-pair girls, etc. as there are young children in public day care institutions.

It seems as if opening hours in the day care institutions are not flexible enough. It is especially difficult for the parents to fetch the children. Private child minders apparently have more elastic opening hours than the public day care institutions.

Many young children spend many daily hours in day care institutions or with child minders. This applies especially to the youngest children or children of single parents.

There are great differences between individual local authorities, both as regards day care coverage and the proportion between the different forms of day care. Some of the geographical variations are caused by a varying demand for facilities in different parts of the country – e.g. different degrees of urbanization. However, the big variations as regards the service level do not seem to be due to similar geographical differences as regards the employmentrate of mothers.

The section on *health* emphasizes that infant mortality has decreased very rapidly and that in the period 1961-76 the death rate of children over one year also decreased.

Road accidents are the most frequent causes of death among young children. Accidents in the home account for the majority of serious accidents amoung young children. In 1975 road accidents caused between 10 and 20 per cent of all deaths among the 1-4-year-olds and between 20 and 30 per cent among the 5-14-year-olds.

The hospitalization frequency of children has increased heavily throughout recent years. In 1973-74 about 9 per cent of the »infant population« was hospitalized. In spite of this there can hardly be any doubt that the health condition of Danish children, at least from a physical point of view, has never been better. A large number of serious infectious diseases has practically disappeared. Ordinary infectious diseases occur with largely the same or a slightly increasing frequency, and there seems to be an increased tendency towards allergy and malnutrition. There has presumeably been a real increase in the incidence of psychical diseases among children.

Since few parents working outside their home are entitled to stay at home on the first day of the child's illness, common children's diseases or minor infections poses great problems

Almost all children under one year of age receive visits from a visiting health nurse. These visits together with the preventive health examinations performed by a doctor play an important role in respect of an early diagnosis of somatic, physical and social problems.

In the overall health effort towards children preventive intervention is given a low priority. The intentions of the social Assistance Act, i.e. current consultation and visiting field work in respect of, among others, families with children who have problems, do not seem to be followed in practice.

Chapter 3

This chapter deals with *the characteristic features of the development of young children and gives a description of some of the prerequisites of an all-round development of personality.*

The section on *prerequisites of an all-round development of personality* is opened by recognizing the importance of the early childhood for the later life of the child and its possibilities of development. Although development is regarded as a lifelong process, it is in this first period of life that the foundation of all later development is built.

Development presupposes social interaction. The child's contacts and activities with other children and grown-ups are, therefore, of vital importance. Even the youngest children need social interaction with grown-ups, who may also convey varied sense impressions and experiences through the loving and caring way in which they are together with and play with the children .

The development process should be understood as an interchange between on the one hand the physiological and psychological structures of the child and on the other hand the external factors of the childhood environment. In this interaction with the surrounding world the child's own activity is a very central one. Since the child acts in and influences its surroundings, these acts will at the same time give it new impressions and experience.

The child can only acquire the necessary knowledge and ability in a social community where activities take place by social interaction.

Play is the dominating activity of young children. To them play is not only recreation or a way of spending time. Young children learn – and learn most – when they are engrossed in their play. They are inspired by the activities of the grown-ups, and in that way their play gradually enables them to attain experience and knowledge of how to act in relation to the world of the grown-ups and the life of the community. The meaning that the child experiences in connection with play and other activities in its daily life, is of great importance. This contains the germ of the motives and motivations which in the long run will dominate that particular person.

The child's experience of itself and its activities may be expressed by the concept of identity. In the process of growing-up the child changes and develops, but already at an early stage certain personality traits will recur. In the linking together of the past with the present and the present with the future, identity is the red thread.

The section on *society, socialization and development of personality* presents the research on socialization, which deals with culture in the broadest sense. This research is based on the realization that there is a connection between a child's development of personality and the cultural and social character of its childhood environment.

One of the most important questions in this connection has been to find out how different forms of bringing up children, depend on the one hand on the social and economic situation of their parents, and on the other hand affect the way in which the children develop, and their later opportunities in life. Different patterns of upbringing are mentioned, and it is discussed how a certain kind of upbringing may affect the well-being and the development of the personality of the children. Furthermore the practice of up-bringing adopted by the parents is viewed in the light of their conditions of life and the demands with which they are being confronted in their daily life.

The parents occupy the central position in the child's network of

social contacts. The primary responsibility rests with them, and emotionally they experience the strongest attachment and the most personal engagement, i.e. all which can be expressed by the words »parental love«.

What determines the young child's attachment to its father and mother is whether they have time, reserves of strength, and empathy. The child is not in itself confined to establishing only one close relationship. It is stated that the child's development will benefit from close relations with several grown-ups because different people make different and unique contributions to the development of the child and because intimacy with several persons makes the child less vulnerable.

Of the research on the importance of the parents to the development of the children only little deal with the role of the father. The mother, on the other hand, has – at any rate until recently – been in the centre, e.g. in connection with research on the effect of mothers' employment on young children's well-being. The results of such research show that the decisive factor is not job or no job, but rather whether the mother is satisfied with her role – as a mother employed outside the home or not.

Being together with and playing with other children plays an important role for the development of the child. Recent research show that already from the first year of their lives children benefit from and are stimulated in their development by being together with other children and that lack of contact with children of the same age may make them particularly liable to getting problems as regards developing social abilities.

A number of investigations show that there can be no doubt that a well-functioning day care institution is of great value to the development of young children, for the reason, among others, that in many ways is a supplement to life at home and gives the children more and other opportunities of activity and experience.

In the section on *goals for the development of young children* it is stated that – unlike what is e.g. the case with primary school education – no goal has been set politically for the tasks of the day care institutions in relation to the development of young children.

In connection with the discussion of goals for the development of young children it is mentioned how the socialization of the rising generation is a complicated balancing act, in which the lives and special backgrounds of young children must be respected at the same time as they get possibilities of acquiring characters and skills so that they in the long run can take up the many challenges of adult life.

In the concluding section some requirements that must be met by the childhood environment are formulated.

Firstly, the childhood environment must have the necessary prere-

quisites for *social contact with other people*. Secondly, the chilhood environment must be of such a nature that it furthers the *development opportunities and opportunities for activities with grown ups as well as children*. Thirdly, the social environment must secure a certain *continuity for the children during their years of growth*.

Chapter 4

Chapter 4 gives *an evaluation of the conditions under which young children grow up*. It is divided into 3 main sections in accordance with the three requirements for the childhood environment presented as the conclusion of the preceding chapter.

The section on *social contact* begins with a comment on the mutual relationship between the child and its parents. It is emphasized that the establishment of a close relationship between parents and their baby takes much time and physical reserves, and that the conditions are not always the most favourable ones. As examples are mentioned that there is not sufficient importance attached to the physical and social demands of the maternity wards, that the maternity leave is too short and does not make allowance for the need of the father and the child of getting intimate with one another, and that many parents are very concerned about where to place the child after the maternity leave has come to an end. At the same time many young parents are insecure because they have very little experience as regards young children.

Concurrent with the fact that many mothers work outside the homes, the daily contact between small children and their parents is subject to a greater time pressure. On week-days there is in most families little time left for being together, and the children's demand for attention and time often coincides with practical doings or parents' own desire to relax or participate in activities outside their home.

When the mothers joined the labour force, the time they used to spend on traditional women's functions was reduced. The care of the young children was left to the staff of the day care institutions and at home it is still the mother who spends most time together with the child and who is responsible for the practical tasks involved.

Sick or ailing children constitute a special problem. They need the care of grown-ups with whom they are familiar, but only a few parents working outside the home are able to look after the children themselves or be with them in connection with hospitalization.

Mothers' increased interest in taking a job is often connected with financial necessity, especially caused by high housing costs. This fact and the lack of flexibility of the labour market results in many mothers having longer working hours than they want to.

The reserve of strength of the parents for being together with their children is not only dependent on the length of the working day. Another factor is the working situation, with many women working in industry being physically and psychologically worn out because of monotonous work at a rapid pace. Unemployment may often be a strain on the person concerned and consequently on the family.

Young childrens' contact with other persons depends among other things on their parents' relationship with family, friends and neighbours. As far as the latter is concerned many inhabitants in new suburbs and housing areas of blocks of flats are generally not so deeply rooted in their immediate environment. At the same time it is often a big problem in many housing environments and in sparsely populated rural distdricts that there is far between playmates.

Most young children extend their sphere of social contacts in the day care institutions. As far as playmates are concerned day care institutions, in particular, ensure that young children get in touch with children of the same age.

The section on *opportunities for self-expression and activities* emphasizes that whereas the private home care system should almost be considered an extension of the environment of the home, day care institutions to a higher degree function as an alternative environment. Here children get the chance of making their experience in a large group of children and they have new scopes of activity and other degrees of freedom.

Young children's scopes of activity vary with the housing conditions and the nature of the immediate outdoor environment. It is mentioned that many new areas of blocks of flats most often are very monotonous, devoid of creative functions and thus lacking inspiration and possibilities of experiencies, that children living in the country side have access to nature and animals all right, but in return there is a long way to children of the same age and to educational and cultural facilities, and that children in the old parts of the towns do not have the same opportunities for self-expression and playgrounds as cars dominate the scene.

The traffic trend is a great problem. It is true that especially families with young children benefit from their own car as public means of transport are difficult to use with prams, etc. But more private cars have entailed higher risks in traffic and the cars have occupied many courtyards and other areas. Children are referred to special playgrounds, but as they are often situated at a fair distance from the homes and as they have a traditional lay-out, they do not seem very attractive.

Many young children do not get the possibility to get a concrete experience of different types of jobs and they do not participate actively in the different tasks in their every-day life. Their ideas of the world of the grown-ups and of society often have to be pieced

together by way of »second hand experience« which among other things they get via TV.

The section on *continuity* is introduced by a discussion of the problems which are caused by the fact that many young children in day care institutions are exposed to a number changes so that over and over again they have to adapt themselves to grown-ups and children with whom they are unfamiliar. This fact hampers children's chances of establishing and developing a stable and close relationship to a limited number of grown-ups and a certain group of children.

From many quarters concern have been expressed over the fact that many young children shuttle from their home to one or even more new environments. It is mentioned that if day care institutions are to function as a valuable supplement to the home, cooperation between parents and those who are responsible for the care of the children, is indispensible. However, this is exactly where the difficulties set in today. The present framework of co-operation between parents and day care staff is insufficient and parents are not secured real codetermination as regards decisive issues, e.g. the educational content of the activities of the institutions. Many parents today feel a substantial powerlessness because they have practically no say in respect of the influence their children are exposed to and marked by.

The last section concludes that there are *two main problems, which are typical of our time,* and which characterizes the conditions under which children grow-up today. One concern is that a large number of children do not get enough contact owing to overworked and stressed parents and the fact that the general tensions in society penetrate into the families and overtax the family's internal ressources. Another concern is that children's chances of identifying themselves with our culture get more and more restricted. The same is true of their possibilities to develop identity in a meaningful social context.

Chapter 5

Chapter 5 contains *an account of the reflections* which form the basis of the Commission's points of view concerning the form and content of a child policy.

In the section on the *Danish reflections on the conditions of families with children* it is recognized by way of introduction that a family policy has not been defined in Denmark, but that it comprises a number of support schemes for families as well as legal measures which regulate the relationship of the members of the family.

The first deliberations on the conditions of family policy were made by the first population commission, which was set up in 1935. The

commission reported 3 times, and quite a few of its proposals were carried through, including the foundation of the Maternity Aid Board in 1935.

The latest overall reflections on family policy took place in a committee set up in 1960 to consider aspects of family policy.

The committee submitted in 1964 (report No 359), a report which gave an account of Danish family policy up till 1964. The report recommended that all activities relating to family policy should fall under one Ministry, and that the rules and regulations on direct allowances under family policy be contained in one act. This was effected in the Family Allowances and Other Family Benefits Act, which entered into effect in 1970. The Act contained regulations on ordinary, increased, extraordinary and special family allowances, on daily cash benefits in the event of maternity, and advance payment of maintenance in respect of children.

The section on *the most important regulations in force on the conditions under which children grow-up*, contains among other things a description of the regulations on family allowances, rent allowance, day care institutions and child minding, maternity leave and other sanitary measures. It is emphasized, however, that, as regards a more detailed description of the individual fields of legislation – including information on rates, total public expenditure etc. – reference is made to the reports made by the Commission's 4 committees.

The section on the *main aspects behind the regulations in force* lays down some principles, which indirectly must have formed the basis of the Danish legislation on children over the last few years:

- financial burdens of having children should be evened out through political initiatives of distribution,
- families in a weak position should be supported so that poor conditions are not transmitted as a social heritage to the next generation,
- all children should have equal opportunities in life
- parents should be secured against discrimination on the labour market because of their children, and
- children are our common future, the future manpower and the future citizens of a democratic society.

In the section on the *formulation of a child policy is* it acknowledged that some activities may best be undertaken within the framework of a family whereas other activities presuppose the support of the society in the shape of various public measures.

Reflections and suggestions on child policy is first of all a question of filling out the necessary functions for children, functions which are best handled by the family. Secondly to strengthen other functions outside the family so that the family and the society jointly take care of the next generation.

It is, therefore, being contemplated what offers and what support should be given to the individual child directly through the family, and which offers should be canalized through public institutions in a broad sense.

Concern for children and their overall conditions should play a much more important part than is does at present as regards legislation and the policy pursued. As an ideal requirement for a child policy it must be demanded that more comprehensive policies are always balanced with special regard to the consequences of the conditions under which children grow up.

Chapter 6

Firstly chapter 6 contains *formulation of some of the objects of the conditions under which children grow up* and secondly *reflections on the means which are to realize the objectives*. Together with the preceding chapter, chapter 6 thus constitutes the fundamental basis, as formulated by the Commission, for the chapters which list the specific proposals.

The section on *the coherence between objects and means of child policy* recognizes, by way of introduction, that the framework which is set for children and families with children, to a very wide extent, are created by society and that the problems can consequently be solved.

Individual problems cannot be solved without seeing them in a greater context. Patchwork solutions lacking perspective and isolated part-solutions cannot do away with the fundamental problems of the families with children. The framework set by society of the conditions for children and families are not inherent in nature, but may be changed partly through the legislation which directly relates to and regulates the conditions of children, partly through other legislation the major part of which indirectly influences the conditions of children.

The section on *some goals as regards the conditions under which children grow up* notes the fact that a number of families with children in different ways lack ressources enough to give their children the life which they actually want to give them.

It will, therefore, be one of the superior aims of a child policy to reduce or remove all undesired obstacles, created by society, to further prosperity for the families and the children. The Commission formulates this by enumerating a number of partial goals of a child policy:

- to respect the individual child as an individual human being in the family and society,
- to give the child a central position in the life of grown-ups,

- to promote, in a wide sense, the physical conditions under which children grow up, and
- to even out differences in the living conditions of children, both in a material sense and in a cultural sense.

The section on *some possibilities of pursuing a child policy* contains a discussion of four possible ways that together express the desire to secure young children a sufficiently stable and emotionally close contact, the experience of a relationship with other children and grown-ups, as well as experience of the life of grown-ups and society as such.

One of the means would to be to try to re-establish the traditional family pattern so that the family could manage financially on one income. Or the immediate environment could be improved and enriched, e.g. through better road safety, by creating common activities or strengthen grass root democracy. Or day care institutions could be established to partly replace the family. And finally the fourth possibility would be to reduce the daily working hours of the parents, and leave the children only part time in the day care institutions.

All four possibilities contain advantages as well as disadvantages and are too schematic to solve the problems individually. More over there might be a need to take different matters into consideration at different times in the life of the child and the family.

This speaks in favour of society making a number of different arrangements available so that parents get a chance to choose the solution, which in their opinion fits best in with their situation and their children's need.

The section on *some basic principles of child policy* reflects the Commission's impression of the factors that should be taken into consideration at the central level when formulating a future child policy. Such policy should rest on:

- equality between the sexes as it is considered disadvantageous to transfer the tratidional pattern of sex roles to the coming generations,
- social equality, not least as regards policy of distribution,
- right and freedom of choice so that regard is paid to discrepancies in the desires, attitudes and ressources of the families,
- flexibility in order to meet changing demands with the individual family, and
- neutrality as regards the parents' choice of the form of cohabitation.

Chapter 7

Chapter 7 contains a discussion of the legal aspects of the child's status in the law of domestic relations that the Commission, has

been asked to consider by the Minister of Social Affairs or has taken up on its own intiative in concert with the Committee on Matrimonial Law set up by the Minister of Justice.

The section on *the child's right to have 2 parents* begins by stating that the Commission does not adopt any special attitude towards how adults live together. The first problem taken up is to what extent the mother of a child born out of wedlock, should be allowed to omit to state to the authorities who is or may be the father of the child. From the point of view that a child should only in very exceptional cases be deprived of the right to a father in a legal sense, the Commission suggests that a practice should be established according to which restraint is exercised as regards relieving the mother of her obligation to tell the name of the father.

Next the *status of the child in a consensual union* is considered, where the mother alone has the custody of the child, whereas the parents have the custody jointly when they are married to each other. The majority of the Commission finds, however, that the actual way in which parents live together should determine what rules should apply to the custody of their children. The majority therefore suggests that the parents should have the possibility to arrange joint custody.

The following section on *the status of the child in case of divorce or dissolution of another form of cohabitation* first states some of the main results of an American study of the reactions of »normal« children to the divorce of their parents. Experience seems to show that it is extremely important to the children to maintain contact with both parents and that the parents are able to solve their own problems in a reasonable way. The majority of the Commission has thus considered an arrangement under which the custody of the child may remain with both parents after a divorce and not, as is now the case, necessarily be given to one of the parents only. The Committee on Matrimonial Law finds that there is no need for any revision in that field. The majority of the Commission emphasizes that an arrangement according to which the custody of the child is not to be given to only one of the parents may help to reduce conflict between the parents and to relieve the parent with whom the child lives, of some of the responsibilities, for both practical and educational tasks. At the same time it is stressed that the parents' joint custody of the child does not necessarily imply that the child must live with both parents by turns. The majority finds that an arrangement under which the custody of the child may remain with both parents after a divorce will be to the advantage of the children. The majority therefore suggests an amendment to the act which makes it possible to make such an arrangement by agreement between the parents and with subsequent registration with the authorities.

Since an amendment to the act that provides the right to parents to agree on joint custody after a divorce does not render superfluous a set of rules to be used by the authorities when deciding in custody

cases, the Commission has considered the establishment of rules of *which authority should make the decision*. According to the rules at present in force, a divorce decree is granted by a Danish administrative authority, if the parents agree on a number of questions, including the question of custody of their children in other cases, by the law courts. The Commission is of opinion that the problems of the children may be aggravated when the parents' divorce case has to be decided by the law courts. Especially because parents in that situation become opponents with conflicting interest, and because most people are unaccustomed to appear before a court. The necessary decision should therefore if possible be made administratively, as in other cases in the social field. No proposals are made that especially concern the fact that the law courts more often give the mother than the father the custody of the children.

In the section on *right of access* it is mentioned that the parent who has not been given the custody of the child after a divorce, automatically gets right of access unlike the father who has previously lived with the mother without being married to her. In principle the parents themselves negotiate the extent of the right of access, but the practice of the administrative authorities – 1 week-end a month, 8-14 days during the summer holidays, and a couple of days during Christmas and Easter – is a guidance. The Child Welfare Commission is of the opinion that the legislation should emphasize that the right of access is a right for the child to maintain contact with the parent with whom it does not live. An extension of the right of access is proposed to the effect that the ruling practice is supplemented with the right of access 1 weekly afternoon on a weekday. Furthermore it is proposed that it shall be possible to grant income-related contributions towards the transport costs of the child in the cases where the parents have no possibility of getting residence close to each other.

Finally the section contains the reflections of the Commission on the possibility of establishing *a better advice service for the parents and better guidance for the authorities who have to decide custody and right of access cases*. Like the Committee on Matrimonial Law, the Child Welfare Commission advocates the abolition of statutory mediation. But the Commission dissociates itself from the proposals of the Committee on Matrimonial Law to develop the general advice service under the Social Assistance Act instead. It is felt that the special need for assistance in emotional questions which arises for many people in divorce situations, cannot be met by this advice service. Instead it is suggested that the family advice service be transferred to the county child guidance centres where guidance must be given, in the beginning without registration of the person concerned. As far as guidance of the authorities is concerned, the Commission finds that certificates issued by child psychiatrists and psychologists and the examinations that precede the issue of the certificates, have great influence on the course of the divorce case. The Child Welfare Commission therefore suggests an extended use of these certificates and

in such a way that allowance is made for any capacity problems that may exist by involving other physicians than child psychiatrists. Furthermore, it is suggested that the authorities should be able to make use of statements by persons with a reasonable, professional background who know the family, as for instance, a head of a day care institution.

In the section on *the child's right to special protection* the Commission considers the parents' right to inflict corporal punishment on their children. The parents' violence, which the Commission agrees on to call corporal punishment of children, is defined as the kind of violence which lies between maltreatment and the rapping of knuckles. It is stated that it is difficult to estimate how widespread the use of violence is in the bringing up of children. A Gallup survey made in 1980 shows that about half the respondents have suffered corporal punishment by their parents, when they were children. The section contains a description of corporal punishment of children as a spontaneous reaction and of corporal punishment of children as an educational means. The Commission regards both forms of corporal punishment of children as extremely inexpedient. They realize, however, that on account of the close mutual connection between children and parents, parents' corporal punishment of their children should continue to be regarded as different from the other forms of violence. Therefore the Commission is of opinion that parents' corporal punishment of their children should not be made a criminal offence. The children should however, be protected through a statement in principle in the legisalation on custody of children. The Commission is besides of opinion that the problem must be considered on the basis of a total valuation of the general conditions of the families and the children and that there is a great need for comprehensive information and debate on violence against children.

The section on *the right of the child to have a say in matters concerning itself* briefly describes the statutory provisions concerning the parents' duties and powers vis-a-vis the child and the limitations applying to the parents' authority over their child in relation to public authorities. It is mentioned that the child does not acquire even a limited right of self-determination – or codetermination until it reaches the age of 12. The Commission finds that the child's rights in the family should be strengthened, and that this could be done by way of a change of attitude on the part of the parents among others. In relation to public authorities there is particularly a need for a strengthening of the child's position in cases concerning custody and right of access. The Commission suggests that it should be the duty of both law courts and administrative authorites always to obtain an insight in and attach improtance to the opinions and wishes of the child in these cases. Finally the Commission agrees to the proposal of the Committee on Marriage according to which a guardian should be appointed to assist the child in cases concerning custody and right of access.

Chapter 8

Chapter 8 contains reflections and suggestions concerning parents' connection with the labour market.

The section on *parents' connection with the labour market* gives a description of the development of the last few years in this field, especially of the increase in the participation rate of women. In 1978 80 per cent of all women with children had a job. Half of them had a part-time job, i.e. less than 30 hours a week.

This trend has resulted in a number of positive concequences. For society, e.g. through the growth in production and an improved basis of taxation. For the women, e.g. through an increased equality and an improvement of their financial independence. For the family through better material living conditions.

But the working day of parents is very long, and on week-days there is often little time left for being together with their children. Their possibility of being together with the baby in the first time after confinement is insufficient, and they only rarely have the opportunity to look after the child themselves, when it is ill.

The section on *daily working hours* goes into detail on the concequences of the limited chances of being together every day. It is being emphasized that the need to secure more time together for parents and children is most pronounced in the case of single parents and in families where both parents work full time.

But it is not a good idea to »force« one of the parents to stay at home if both of them want active employment. Also women with young children want to retain their connection with the labour market. Many want part-time employment. Consequently it is necessary to carry through a change of the state of affairs of the labour market so that both parents get the chance of being more together with their children without reducing their chances on the labour market.

The section on *fundamental and long-term points of views* concerning parents' connection with the labour market emphasizes that the private as well as the public labour market appear to be perhaps the most important of the many individual factors which contribute to setting up the framework of the all round conditions under which children grow up.

It will therefore be necessary to choose wether regard to the labour market as such is to set up the framework of children's conditions when growing up – or vice versa.

The Commission thinks that the daily working hours be reduced to 6 hours in respect of all workers – not only parents of young children. This would ensure that grown-ups and children had more time together, the concept of equality would be stengthened, and the vulnerability of parents of young children on the labour market would be lessened since it would not be a reduction of their working hours only.

The Commission regrets that improvements have not already been carried through by the legislation on maternity leave etc. It is the fundamental opinion of the Child Welfare Commission that the proposals made in the Report of 1978 from the joint committee between the Council on Equality and the Child Welfare Commission (Report No 846) on maternity leave, care leave and the right to absence in order to look after sick children, be implemented.

In the last section the *proposals* of the Commission are submitted.

As it is the impression of the Commission that at present there is neither economic nor political background for the implementation of the fundamental wish of the Commission to introduce a 6-hour-working day in respect of everyone, it is being suggested that all parents working full time, who have children at the age up to and inclusive of 8, get the right to reduce their daily working hours to 6 hours, and that this right be provided for by law. The majority suggests furthermore that financial compensation be given, to a certain extent, for lost wages and salaries resulting from the reduction of the daily working hours.

Besides the Commission suggests that for reasons of child minding as well as education there must be a place for all children under the day care arrangements run by the public authorities if the parents want them enrolled.

And finally the Commission suggests that women be granted 26 weeks' maternity leave after childbirth, that parents with children under 4 years are entitled to absence in connection with the child's illness, and that a limited right to maternity leave for fathers be introduced.

Chapter 9

Chapter 9 contains reflections and suggestions on families with young children and social community. It is opened by calling attention to the fact that if young children are to be secured life rich in human qualities, a very essential factor is the nature of the relationship between parents and children and the interrelationship in the family. Another decisive factor is young children's contacts with and activities together with other children and grown-ups. To this adds the qualities which derive from belonging to a given culture.

In the first section on important qualities in young children's lives it is mentioned as a problem that many parents are uncertain in their role as persons who are to bring up a child, and that being together in the home only to a small extent rests on carrying out mutual tasks and activities. It is moreover emphasized that despite the fact that parents have the main responsibility for the childhood

of their children, they have only little influence on the life of the young children outside their homes.

As regards the immediate environment it is stated that social interaction between families with young children and the other residents of the neighbourhood, is undeveloped and that local initiatives taken with a view to improving the conditions for children (clearance of courtyards, reorganization of traffic, etc.) come up against many barriers.

In connection with the day care arrangements it is mentioned that stability of young children's social contacts is too poor, and that many of them have not got sufficient opportunities as regards participation in and gaining experience of life outside the institution.

The section on *long-term and fundamental points of views* alleges that several families can no longer alone offer their young children all the conditions which must be present to secur an all-round development and a gradual integration in our culture. Young children also need the qualities deriving from belonging to and participating in a cultural community.

With a view to giving young children and their parents better opportunities to participate in an extended community in their immediate environment it is therefore pointed out as an essential fact that the different environments in which children live their everyday life in the course of their childhood are interconnected. This applies to the different environments of everyday and the changing environments that children encounter in their childhood. Thirdly parents' position and their influence on the conditions for their children should be strengthened. And fourthly expert assistance should to a much higher degree than is the case today be directed towards supporting and furthering self-contained social network in the immediate environments through cooperation with the groups in question.

As far as the position and influence of the parents are concerned the Commission finds that, in the long term, it could be very beneficial if parents of young children have contact with and the opportunity to get support from other, perhaps more experienced parents. The majority therefore suggests that apart from an increase in the number of courses preparing parents for birth, autonomous local groups of parents are set up to give advice. Moreover proposals are made with a view to strengthening parents' real influence on the conditions of their children in the day care institutions.

As regards the offers relating to the immediate environment, the Commission suggests among other things that pilot schemes be supported financially and that in scarcely populated areas special initiatives are taken with a view to giving young children living there the same opportunities as young children in the town areas to benefit from educational offers.

In principle the majority of the Commission is against the fact that child minding in private homes is put on an equal footing with day care institutions. It is therefore suggested that the child minding arrangements are reserved for certain groups of children. The majority of the Commission suggests that the child minder participate in courses arranged by the local authorities and that the child minding arrangements be attached to the day care institutions.

In continuation of this it is moreover suggested that certain day nurseries, kindergartens, recreational institutions, and nursery schools be integrated in order to create greater coherence in the life of the young children.

The Commission is divided on the question if it is desireable to create legal title for recreational arrangements under the educational authorities.

As to the structural framework of the day care institutions the Commission suggests a more flexible form and that pilot schemes like the Swedish MAFF-project are started (multipurpose nursery schools and recreational institutions).

As regards the number of staff in the day care institutions the majority of the Commission suggests that the non-trained staff of the day nurseries successively be replaced by trained educationalists, and that the number of staff is increased so as to include in their work load some hours for cooperation with parents.

The Commission suggests that a proposal be worked out containing all principles and goals of the day care institutions in conformity with what has been adopted in respect of the Folkeskole (primary school) and youth education. Furthermore the majority suggests that the National Board of Social Welfare publish guidelines on educational activities in the day care institutions, and that the draft worked out by a committée under the Commission be tested in a number of institutions with a view to publish such guidelines later on.

The majority of the Commission finds that the staff of day care institutions and child minders need easier access to advising bodies. The majority suggets that all municipalities employ advisors on education and pediatricians. A majority moreover finds that apart from guidance given by a school psychologist there is a need for further psychological assistance in the day care institutions.

Various minority statements on chapter 9 have been put forward, e.g. concerning obligatory pedagogical training of child minders and concerning special legislation on the day care services sector.

Chapter 10

Chapter 10 contains reflections and proposals for the physical framework for young children during their years of growth. It starts

by recognizing that the physical environment greatly influences the life of children and their parents. The physical framework has an effect on the state of health of children and characterizes young children's play and activities together with others.

The first section on the physical environment of young children emphasizes that the improved housing standard has reduced the occurence of classical housing diseases and that it seems as if new symptoms have occured, e.g. the so-called »concrete disease«, and also that many accidents take place in the home. It is mentioned that many families with children live very crowdedly and that quite a number of young children still live in very poor dwellings. It is dificult to get a dwelling as the supply of rented dwellings has become smaller.

As far as the immediate environment is concerned the Commission considers it very problematic that traffic trends have entailed a substantial risk in most areas and that many children grow up in new areas which are devoid of experience and are very monotonous.

As to the physical lay-out of the day care institutions it is among other things stated that there has been some modification of the requirements as regards the physical framework and also that guidelines and pilot schemes are lacking. The lack of flexibility of the day care institutions is underlined as is the problem involved if the physical standard of the child minders' homes is not controlled.

It is also very unfortunate that many children in case of hospitalization are admitted to ordinary wards for grown-ups where the layout and the staff not always make allowance for the needs of the child.

The second section on the basic and long term view of the Commission stresses that young children and their parents ought to have greater weight in superior planning and legislation, that the supply of dwellings should ensure that families with young children get the greatest possible freedom of choice as to where and how they want to live, and that all young children should have access to a safe environment as regards traffic. As to day care institutions it is considered of fundamental importance that a certain standard is secured, e.g. through guidelines laid down centrally. As regards hospitals it is stated that all hospitales in major towns in the long term ought to have children's wards.

In the third section the *proposal* of the Commission is put forward. In respect of the housing situation of families with children it is suggested among other things that the supply of rented dwellings be increased through abolition of the housing quota and that efforts are made to improve dwellings and renovate old parts of towns. At the same it is suggested that the local authorities establish an active housing service.

As to the housing areas it is suggested that young children's play-

ground facilities in the immediate environments be improved by building safe play grounds as regards traffic, differentiated speed limits, no through-fare passages, etc. Furthermore better support in respect of experimental playgrounds and open spaces, which may give many-sided experiences and chances of engaging in common activities irrespective of age.

It is moreover suggested that the local authorities include school buses in the public transport system.

With a view to improving the physical quality of the day care institutions the Commission proposes that legal title is created to fix centrally guidelines on the physical framework of all day care institutions, and that guidelines on the physical lay-out and building material be published. Experiments should be carried out in this field.

As regards the organization of hospitals it is suggested that children may be hospitalized in special children's wards, that over-night facilities be arranged for their parents, and that sick infants and their mothers may be hospitalized in the same ward or in wards next to each other.

Chapter 11

Chapter 11 contains considerations and proposals as regards the financial framework of the life of families with children.

The section on *financial assistance to families with children* includes payment for day care arrangements, financing of houses, and rent rebate schemes, as well as cash benefits.

During the last few decades there has been an improvement in the material conditions of life of families with children, although the consuming-possibilities of ordinary families have been reduced somewhat of late years. But the increase in prosperity is far from evenly distributed, there are still great inequalities as regards the conditions of life of different groups of the population and one fourth of all families with children belong to the low-income group.

This implies a special need for considerations of measures that are specially directed towards this group and great importance must therefore in the opinion of the majority be attached to the implications of any policy of allocation.

The parents' payment for day care arrangements, especially day nurseries, has in many cases increased so much that it is a heavy burden for a young family with great expenses in connection with settling down.

The housing expenses of families with children are in the whole

much bigger than the housing expenses of families without children, both in owner-occupied dwellings and in rented dwellings. One of the reasons is that the economic development in society and in the housing sector over the last few years has created some problems for young families which the housing policy conducted has not been able to solve.

Sufficient allocation has not been paid to the rent rebate schemes. Low-income families with young children, very young families with children, and single mothers with young children have often the poorest housing conditions or have heavy housing expenses compared with the income.

As regards the cash benefits the majority stresses the point of view that they are primarily meant for families with children, who are in special need of assistance. Thus they become part of the efforts of the selective child policy to eliminate the difference between the conditions of life of children.

Furthermore an account is given of the special problems applying to children of single parents, and it is stressed that they typically have a very long working week, only little spare time in which to attend to their children, and frequently a low income and poor housing conditions, besides which they are burdened with the increased responsibility following from being the only one to bring up and support their children.

In the section on the *fundamental and long term points of view* the Commission by way of introduction discusses price fixing as regards day care arrangements. The majority of the Child Welfare Commission is of opinion that the wish to place on a par day care arrangements and the pedagogic functions of the primary school and to place on a par the obligations of society towards children below school age and children of school age, make it desirable not to demand payment from the parents. But in the shorter term the Commission wants definitively to give higher priority to considerations of capacity than to the abolition of parents' payment.

The Commission's considerations as to principles of *rent rebate schemes and financing of housing* are based on the wish to ensure that all families with young children can get a qualitatively satisfactory dwelling. On account of the structure of the Danish housing market – including especially the financing system – these considerations cannot be separated from more general considerations of how the total housing market functions and may be changed. The Danish system of financing of housing has for instance resulted in far too high housing costs for families who just settled down.

The majority of the Child Welfare Commission is of opinion

> *that* there should be real equality as regards direct or indirect public subsidies per dwelling – no matter whether they are owner-occupied dwellings or rented dwellings

that the financing terms in respect of house building and improvements of dwellings should be reformed

that it should not be possible to convert any future public financing of housing into an increase of consumption through the mortgaging of the appreciation of real property, and

that there must be a substintial change and extension of the existing rent rebate system so that those who are worst off get a chance to acquire a dwelling of modern standard.

The need for considerations of the use of cash allowances depends on the assumption that special groups of families with children are different from other groups in that they lack purchasing power. This is a consequence of the income differences in society and cash benefits thus become part of policy of allocation. The majority of the Child Welfare Commission feels that the use of cash allowances for free consumption should in the longer term be changed in such a way that especially families with special needs for financial assistance will benefit from these allowances.

In the last section the Commission submits its *proposals*.

Although the majority is of the fundamental opinion that the costs of day care arrangements for children should in the longer term be financed via taxes, the necessary and required expansion of the capacity is given a higher priority than the abolition of fee charged to parents. The Commission has therefore considered the rules of payment and suggests that the limit for exemption from payment of fees should be raised to 60,000 Dkr a year, that the fee should amount to 10 per cent of social incomes above 60,000 Dkr for a place for 0-2-year-olds as well as for 3-6-year-olds, though with an upper limit for fees charged to parents of 1,000 Dkr a month for 0-2-year-olds and of 500 Dkr for 3-6-year-olds.

The majority of the Commission further proposes a number of modifications of the regulations concerning financing of housing and the rent rebate schemes, e.g. the introduction of index-linked loans, modifications of the regulations concerning deduction of interest on mortgage debts, an extension of the interest subsidies for non-profit housing corporations scheme and the rent subsidies scheme, and the introduction of a subsidy scheme for houseowners with children.

The Commission furthermore proposes changes of the regulations concerning cash allowances, e.g. that the ordinary family allowance be raised by 50 per cent, and that the increased family allowance be doubled. The intended redistribution should be effected by starting the graduation according to incomes at a lower level than now. It is supposed that family allowances should be fully adjusted and that payment should be made without application. Furthermore, that fathers' and mothers' maintenance contributions should be equal with the present maintenance contribution paid by fathers, and that provisions of the Social Assistance Act concerning remission from

repayment will also apply to persons of limited means, who are liable to pay allowances.

Furthermore the majority suggests that cohabitation with a third party be regarded as binding – so that the special allowances to breadwinners who are in actual fact single, are forfeited only after one year. Finally the Commission suggests that all breadwinners who are in actual fact single should be entitled to educational aid in pursuance of section 42 of the Social Assistance Act and that the aim of the further work on the social income should be established on an income basis which as precisely as possibly reflects the needs of the recipient of social allowances.

Chapter 12

Chapter 12 discusses some families with children that are characterized by being in a special situation.

In the first section it is pointed out that even if the subject of the Commission's valuations and proposals according to its terms of reference is children and families with children in general, it has nevertheless decided to make some specified proposals aiming at improving the conditions of young children with severe physical or psychical handicaps as well as of children of immigrants.

In the second section the group of *young children with severe physical or psychical handicaps* is narrowed down to 3-4 per cent of the young children. It is pointed out that no matter whether these children are living at home or at institutions their development and welfare will on the one hand make heavier demands than the development and welfare of other children. On the other hand they have the same fundamental needs as other children, and this makes continued efforts of integration and normalization desirable.

The majority of the Commission accepts the intentions behind the changed criteria for financial assistance to families with handicapped young children living at home. But as regards these families specially, the Commission has noted that parents' care of and solicitude for handicapped young children living at home is a both time-consuming and often strenuous task. The Commission therefore suggests that the capacity of the institutions is increased so that handicapped children living at home can get increased access to periodical stay at an institution or relief home. To ensure parents the greatest possibile freedom of choice as to how the necessary relief may otherwise be arranged, it is suggested that uniform rules of payment for staying at a relief institution, occational domestic help and other form of help from e.g. relations and friends be introduced.

In the section on *children of immigrants* some special problem are pointed out. There are in Denmark about 10,000 children at the age

of 0-6 years from the so-called third countries, distributed on 100 nations. The problems are partly a high degree of sickliness, one of the causes of which is insufficient use of preventive care, partly a number of psycho-social problems caused for instance by the conflict of cultures and the insufficient command of the mother tongue as well as the Danish lanuage.

In order to induce mothers to make use of the preventive care the Commission suggests the establishment of groups of mothers and the stationing of female interpreters in the areas where the immigrant families live. The Commission is further of opinion that it ought to be possible to assist the children in the use of their mother tongue when they are staying at a day care institution. It is suggested that it should be possible within the ordinary day care institution system to offer such assistance as takes special account of the needs of the immigrants.

A minority statement has been made on the financial circumstances of parents with a handicapped child living at home.

Chapter 13

Chapter 13 contains a number of *priorities, as well as considerations of the use of broader solutions to some problems of child policy.*

The Commission cannot accept a static allocation of ressources in a dynamic society. Irrespective of the given framework and irrespective of the present problems of achieving an equilibrium in the Danish economy – the Commission is of the opinion that there is a profound need for improving the conditions of children and families with children. The Commission realises on the other hand that some of the proposals are of such a character that they can only be carried out over a number of years.

In the section on *fundamental and concrete priorities* the Commission draws attention to some areas where quick action is required – without thereby committing itself to a fixed order of priority:

It should thus be ensured

that the chief consideration in determining the child's status in the law of domestic relations is the consideration of the interests of the child,

that parents and children get better opportunities of being together,

that there is a levelling of the conditions under which children live,

that publicly run day care schemes shall have a place to all children whose parents want it,

that all children whose parents want it, are made a pedagogical offer in the form of a daily stay at an institution,

that all families with children get financial possibilities of acquiring a qualitatively satisfactory dwelling,

that young children during their years of growth are given stimulating and secure physical – that is housing and environmental – surroundings,

that all children grow up under healthy conditions, and

that the conditions of quite speical groups of families with children (immigrant children and children with severe physical and psychical handicaps) are improved.

The section on *delimitations of sectors* points out the problematic circumstance that the political and administrative responsibility for the legislation concerning children and their families is spread over several different public sectors.

This problem is aggravated by the fact that there is not at the political and administrative level a sufficiently effective co-ordination between the various responsible bodies. The Commission is therefore of the opinion that – centrally as well as decentrally – there should be a more determined and constructive attitude towards the possibilities of co-ordination across the administrative sectors and the political committeés.

In the section on *children in the superior planning* the Commission is contemplating various possibilities of ensuring that the legislation directly concerning the conditions of children, is evaluated and framed as a coherent whole, as well as that the general legislation on other matters is evaluated on the basis of the consequences for children and families with children. The majority of the Commission suggests the establishment of an administrative body to consider the general conditions of families with children and to coordinate the legislative and other initiatives that have an influence on the conditions of children and families with children.

The majority of the Commission is of opinion that this body should be invested with full power and authority under ministerial responsibility, but has not wished to suggest any particular government department.

The section on *children in the municipal economy* contains considerations of the connection between social needs, a high service level and a bad municipal economy. These factors may collectively constitute a vicious circle in the economy of a municipality, which may reduce a municipality's possibilites of e.g. fulfilling its obligations as regards the children's conditions of growth or of taking special initiatives.

The Commission is therefore of opinion that criteria should be established for the meting out of block grants which to the widest

possible extent reflect the real needs for social assistance in the municipalities, and, furthermore that it is necessary to consider the financing rules in the social and related fields, where the existing financing schemes may block new thinking and experimental schemes.

In the section on *experimental schemes* the Commission finally stresses that experiments should be made to a far greater extent than before across the social, health and welfare, and educational sectors and within each sector.

Summary of the minority statements made on chapters 11 and 13

A minority (Lis Møller and Inga Steiner Sørensen) finds that the majority of the Commission in several chapters go far beyond the prerequisites of the setting up of and the composition of the Child Welfare Commission by making statements on problems which may very well influence the conditions of children, but which are not children's problems especially.

The minority does not think that the question of a continued leveling out of incomes is to be discussed at the suggestion of the Child Welfare Commission and dissociates itself from the social equality which the majority has in view. The minority finds that the majority has nowhere accounted for what by them is understood by »social equality«. A criterion of income cannot in this respect be taken as a basis as the burden of expenses may tax different families differently, and the provision of the volume of savings necessary for the economy is hardly conceivable in a state of social equality. The minority fears that the attempt made by the majority to aim at social equality may entail unfortunate consequences for the growth and the initiatives on which the prosperity of society is founded.

The minority cannot accept that day care institutions should be free of charge and entirely disaggrees with the majority in the view that »goal-directed services« ought to be given higher priority than cash benefits. In the opinion of the minority these benefits give parents greater freedom and consequently better freedom of choice as to how to apply the benefits granted by society in accordance with their own desires, in the best way, and to the benefit of the children for whom they are responsible.

As far as the right to inflict corporal punishment on children is concerned the minority refers to the views expressed by them in chapter 7.

The minority cannot agree to the proposals on joint custody of children, neither as regards consensual unions nor in the case of

separation or divorce, but it finds that the right of access should be extended. The minority cannot agree to a delimitation of the concept »single supporter«.

The minority thinks that the majority has not sufficiently deliberated the proposal for the introduction of the right to a 6-hour-working day in respect of parents with children under 8, and which was to entail compensation for the loss of earned income.

The minority does not think that the Child Welfare Commission is competent enough to go into the matters of the housing market as such and has therefore given up the idea to polemize with the majority on the often politically delicate problems which notoriously, is contained in housing policy.

The minority does not have the same expectations as regards the concept of social income as does the majority since it will mean that several persons, including families with handicapped children living at home, will be deprived of the benefits they are in receipt of today.